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The War and the Spirit of Youth

Atlantic Papers

The War and the Spirit of Youth

Maurice Barrès
Anne C. E. Allinson
Sir Francis Younghusband

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A

PREFACE

This little book is an attempt to perpetuate the influence of three papers published at intervals in *The Atlantic*, by a Frenchman, an Englishman, and an American, which, written from divers angles, seek in the dreadful welter of the war some common revelation of spiritual comfort and advance. After three years of carnage, the world faces the Sphinx on a single quest: Is the dreadful agony of these years meaningless and wanton? Is the sole lesson we may hope to learn some wise man's plan for warding off a new holocaust, some covenant of nations to keep the peace and leave us to make perfect our material welfare? Brutal and brutalizing in every physical sense these years have been; now they threaten to bankrupt the spiritual universe. The three Atlantic writers, one, a questioner by temperament, who to his own amazement has come to see the regeneration of all life in the miracle which the war works in the younger generation; another, by pro-

fession a soldier, who went unscathed and unbelieving through the perilous march to Lhassa, only to find as the result of a painful and disabling accident a new and vivid faith born of physical impotence and pain; the third, an American woman, whose adventures are of the spirit, and who has come to her new belief from far distant fields of the imagination: all three unite in confidence that the generation now culminating in manhood is passing through blackness into light brighter than any dawn which we have known.

The spirit of the volume is the spirit of youth learning in the Book of Life, and we cannot introduce it better than by quoting the final stanzas of a poem by Laurence Binyon, also published in *The Atlantic*, which represents the ancient college, nurturer of youth, as she consigns her beautiful young men to a teacher wiser and more majestical than she:

"*For oh, in youth she lives, not in her age!*
Her soul is with the springtime and the young;
And she absents her from the learned page,
Studious of high stories yet unsung,

"More precious to her now than wisdom's book
Because her own. Her faith is in those eyes
That clear into the gape of hell can look,
Putting to proof ancient philosophies,

"Such as the virgin Muses would rehearse
Beside the silvery, swallow-haunted stream
In their gray cloister. But immortal verse
Is now exchanged for its immortal theme,

"Victory, proud loss, and the enduring mind;
Youth that has passed all praises and has won
More than renown, being that which faith divined,—
Reality more radiant than the sun—

"She gave; she gives. A gift more than all days
Of dedicated lore, of storied art!
And she resigns her beauty to men's gaze
To hide the riches of her bleeding heart."

In such a spirit this volume, too, is dedicated.

Atlantic Monthly Office, E. S.
August 1917.

Young Soldiers of France

By Maurice Barrès

Member of the French Academy

To-day the noble-hearted American nation is asking on its own account the question which, for nearly three years now, the French nation has been asking itself: 'What will be the outcome of this war, which is modifying our national soul? What manner of men will come back to us from the trenches when victory has been won?'

For two years and a half, our young soldiers have been learning the lessons of war; shoulder to shoulder they have been winning their manhood, their *croix de guerre*, their promotions. They are being formed on the same model; they are being initiated into the rules of discipline and system; they are amassing a treasure of sober thoughts, and friendships which will suffice for the

whole duration of their lives. By virtue of their profound impressions, their first tremendous experiences, every man of them belongs now and for all time to the world of the trenches. Such an education means a France unified and purified. In these young men is taking place a resurrection of our most glorious days. Some great thing is about to come into being.

I should like to show you the eyes of these radiant boys, turned toward the future, full of life, full of love of nature, of their parents, of their country, and consenting so readily to die; but how can I make you see the unforgettable purity of their gaze as they scan the horizon, seeking, not their own destiny, but the destiny of their country? Better far to call some of them in person from the ranks—youths chosen at random from the length and breadth of France; they shall speak to us themselves, and let us see, with no barrier

between us, the boundless good-will shining from their faces. Let us listen to these soldier-boys, beloved of their comrades, unknown to their commanders, lost in the rank and file, as they open their hearts to their families.

We shall see that the task they have set themselves is the glorification of their country at the cost of their blood. It is their will that from this slaughter France, and, through her, all mankind, shall flower anew.

Young Alfred Eugène Cazalis, a pastor's son—student at the Theological Seminary of Montauban, and a private in the 11th Regiment of Infantry, who died for France at nineteen, writes to his parents,—

'More and more, in the face of all those who have struggled and fallen, in the presence of the mighty effort which has been made, my thoughts turn to the France of to-morrow—to the divine France which is *bound* to be. I could

not fight on if I did not hope for the birth of that France, so richly deserving that men should kill one another and die for her sake.'

Jean Rival, a Grenoble boy, son of a college professor, who died for France in his twentieth year, writes to his younger brother,—

'My greatest comfort in the difficult moments which I must endure here is to think that you, my little brothers and sisters, are all doing your duty as I am. My task is to fight like a brave soldier; yours, to work just as courageously. Small and unimportant as you may seem to be in this great France of ours, you owe it to yourself to do your utmost to make yourself bigger, richer, nobler. After the war France will sorely need intelligent minds and strong arms; and you, the boys of today, will be the young manhood of tomorrow. You will be called on then to

take the place of a soldier who has died for our country.'

Léo Latil, the son of a doctor of Aix-en-Provence, sergeant in the 67th Infantry, died for France at twenty-four. He writes to his family,—

'Our sacrifices will be sweet if we win a great and glorious victory,—if there shall be more light for the souls of men; if truth shall come forth more radiant, better beloved. We must not forget for a moment that we are fighting for great things—for the very greatest things. In every sense, this victory of ours will be a victory of the forces of idealism.'

Young Antoine Boisson, born of a family of soldiers, at Lure, in one of those little towns of Eastern France so rich in the military virtues, left his *lycée* to enlist, at the outbreak of war. While an *aspirant* in the 47th Regiment of Artillery, he died for France at eight-

een. In his diary—the date is January 1, 1916,—he writes,—

'To-day begins the new year. It will be the year of victory. What will it mean for me? The greatest year of my life, surely, if God grants that I survive. I am going to fight; I am going to take part in war—in real war, in a holy war which for seventeen months has numbered so many victims—friends, comrades, fellow countrymen. Whatever destiny may be awaiting me, I shall waste no time thinking about the future. I confess I said to myself this morning, "What will be left of me when still another year has taken the place of this one?" But my conscience quickly replied, "Do your duty, your whole duty. That is the only thought worthy of a volunteer soldier like yourself." Let soul and heart obliterate the animal instincts and the revolt of one's baser nature. A man must hold up to himself some great dream to follow, some goal

to reach. And what is this war for, if not to train character? It has developed within me feelings I am proud of, though I am at a loss to say why.

'I am proud of being a soldier, of being young, of knowing that I am brave and high-spirited; I am proud of serving France, the land of my birth. Loyalty to the flag, love of country, respect for the given word, the sense of honor—these, for me, are no hollow, meaningless phrases; they ring like a bugle-call in my young heart, and for them, when the moment comes, I shall be able to make the supreme sacrifice.'

Ten thousand voices, all in harmony, rise from the young men of the classes of 1914, 1915, 1916, and 1917, in response to their country's call. A junior officer, detailed in November, 1914, to instruct some Norman and Breton recruits—boys called to the colors before their time—at the barracks of Saint-Lô, set his pupils their daily exercise in

writing. Here, taken at random, is what one of them wrote:—

'Tremble, Germans! France hastens to invoke her greatest hope, the class of 1914. They are twenty years old. Mere boys, you say; what chance have they against the "kolossal" German army? What can they do, these young men whose strong hands, already trained, are lovingly fondling the stocks of their rifles? They will do as did their forefathers—the men of Valmy, of Austerlitz, of Rivoli, and of Solferino! They will conquer!'

Sublime though they all are, these voices differ. Every one of these pages, taken from the field-diaries of our young soldiers, is a variant of the same high theme. There are no two identical leaves in the whole vast forest, but each one, in these days of storm, yearns to come fluttering down to earth, that earth may be the richer for their fall. These boys

consecrate themselves to the most glorious destiny. And so, while they are making the France of to-morrow, France herself is being made in them. Already this miracle is manifest on the surface of their lives, in their words, in their acts. O blessed augury!

I have no wish to make the mistake of classifying their aspirations, their flights of soul, and of crystallizing too hastily this free and flexible spirit. Let us watch the young sensibilites of these soldiers as they live and breathe and take color; and from day to day, as we read their letters and follow the emotions they share with their families, we shall see that their instincts are beginning to work with the harmony and coördination of some great mechanism. Beneath the surface of the ocean, all torn by terrible whirlpools, thousands of tiny coral islands are drawing together, fusing themselves into one. A new world is coming into being.

Léo Latil left his home at Aix-en-Provence, where, near his family, he was studying for his degree of doctor of philosophy under the guidance of Maurice Blondel, the well-known author of *L'Action*.

'What charming hillsides, what noble rivers!' writes this young Provençal, as he goes farther north; 'truly, this country of France is worth fighting for!'

He comes to the forests of the Meuse, close by the low hills, the springs and groves that Jeanne d'Arc knew.

'A wooded slope, terraced with three lines of trenches. Opposite, across the valley, *they* are in possession. What a glorious countryside! in all France, none lovelier! If you only knew what good friends to soldiers the woods are! Under their protection one may venture forth from dug-outs and bomb-proofs; one may bathe in living springs, and the *Taubes* see nothing. One drawback only: those ugly brutes across the valley

climb stealthily up the trees and snipe at us.'

I know of no pastoral poetry more limpid, more crystal-clear than these letters, in which one seems to catch a fleeting glimpse of Cowper's hare and the partridges of Francis Jammes. Our young warrior watches them flash past with his good-humored smile:—

'The one thought that helps me through all trials is that we are spending every moment close to Nature, and growing to know her as no mere civilian could ever hope to do. One evening, when the little schoolmaster and I had come back late, and every scrap of room in the bunk-house was taken, we flung ourselves down side by side at the foot of a big beech. Scarcely a moment before the rain began to murmur beneath the leaves. The great tree had not been able to protect us. But then I thought, "What harm can come to me from this Nature, which has been so friendly?"

Another evening, in a lonely dell, I heard a nightingale sing so wondrously that its voice held us silent for a long, long time. Nature consoles me; she is my friend; I am in her confidence. I have learned the secrets of every hour of day and night. In these Meuse woods, which I call my woods, I have seen every little leaf born, every copse turn green anew. They shelter me and protect me when the ordeal is at hand.'

This fellowship with Nature—frequent enough among our young soldiers—is touching indeed. In her they find a mother whom boys of their age, in a happier life, are slow to recognize. As I listen to Léo Latil, I seem to see an exile, some young descendant of Theocritus and Virgil, a Sicilian shepherd, in our forests of Lorraine; and as I am about to speak my thought, he takes the words from my mouth:—

'The moonlight is magnificent. I have slept like a shepherd on a couch of dead

leaves, in spite of the fearful noise of the 75's, which are clattering away behind us.'

Others have loved Nature as dearly as this boy loved her, and Maurice de Guérin, coming from his fair Southland, felt the influence of the Northern sky as quickly as the young Provençal. But what is the end of their sylvan intoxication? Léo Latil turns it to good account: 'I am determined to set free those hillsides, those tree-tops waving rhythmically behind the enemy's trenches.'

He repeats the thought later. This fusion of calm, peaceful impressions of the Meuse woodlands with the burning spirit of sacrifice stirs one almost to the point of anguish. For this young soldier there exists no imaginary conflict between the cult of Nature and heroic Christianity. Self-immolation, the spirit of sacrifice, has seemed to us irreconcilable with this enchantress. How easily he subordinates great Pan

to the Son of God crucified! The beauty of the skies, the forests, the rivers of France furnishes him with just so many more incentives to the fulfillment of his duty.

Moreover, the memories of home life, the daily letters breathing forth the fragrance of happiness and affection so pervasive in happy households, far from sapping the purpose of this young heart, make it all the firmer.

A child is born into the family circle. To the young mother Léo Latil writes,—

'All my best wishes to you! After all, the *poilu* is not indestructible, and care must be taken to replace him. Then, too, it is good to think we are fighting for all those little children, who shall have free and peaceful lives.'

Though his thoughts wander back to the home in Aix-la-Provence, or give themselves over to Nature, he remains faithful to the realities of his soldier's life.

'I wish you could have seen the procession of *poilus* coming back from the trenches to the rear. Heavily bearded they are, and long-haired; caked with mud, plodding along on their sticks, and carrying on their backs a large and strange collection of bedding, tools, and camp-dishes. One might think that all the beggars and the luckless from all the highways of the world were filing past; but their spirit is so splendid that we always feel like cheering them. . . .

'I am now serving my apprenticeship as sergeant. Nothing difficult about it, but one must keep one's mind on a hundred little things, and with it all never forget to be just. One must know how to demand a great deal, to have authority, and to acquire still more, without losing the human touch. One must be able to hearten one's men and console them. All this can be acquired, and is well worth trying for.'

This lofty idea of the dignity of com-

mand, this fine anxiety to make the most of one of the humblest ranks of the system, show us that beneath all this fragrant poetry, joyous and perfect in taste as the deathless songs of Mistral, there breathes a stout soul.

'Do not pray,' he writes to his family, 'that I may be spared suffering. Pray rather that I may be able to bear it, and that the courage I long for may be given me.'

In such souls there are no dark corners. They are penetrated by the full light of day, even to the innermost arcana. His family, his beloved land of France, his brothers-in-arms, his religion—these are the voices which call this lovable boy to his duty. He is ready now for whatever may come; he is about to leave the country of Jeanne d'Arc—in September, when autumn in Lorraine is most poignantly lovely. And in this same month the young hero is to fulfill his destiny.

'If you could only have seen our leave-

taking! Evening; the kitchen of a country inn—a great Lorraine kitchen, clean as could be, with a roaring blaze in the huge fireplace. Already day was drawing her veil about her, and the night-mists were rising from the marsh-lands. The table was loaded with bottles of wine which the proprietor had brought up. We stood around, leaning on our rifles; the two little girls, over in the corner, were sobbing as if their hearts would break. Even the old man himself was moved. As for us, we were cracking jokes; I swaggered about, with my American pipe between my teeth. Once more, for the last time, we drank each other's healths and kissed cheeks wet with tears; then we filed out into the darkness, dragging our gun-stocks over the floor. It was all like some quaint old picture—one of those moments of poetry or legend which you might think could exist only in books.'

Before he says farewell to this Lor-

raine of which he wrote, 'We shall come back as pilgrims, after the war, to this green Lorraine with its rolling hills, its meadows, and its woods,'—before he dies, let us enjoy one more of this young Provençal's pictures of the Bar-le-Duc countryside:—

'We were in an orchard, lying at ease, awaiting orders. I had forbidden my men to pick any of the plums; they could only gather up the windfalls lying in the grass. The little boys of the village, however, who were always trailing along behind us, swarmed up the trees and shook them. What a downpour of plums—and how good they were!'

O Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in comparison with this, your cherry tree at Annécy and your two charming girls count for little indeed! Here, young warriors of France are resting in the grass, and the village urchins of Lorraine are shaking the plum trees!

One moment more—we can never have too many of these sketches by young hands now dead. From this one, eight lines stand out—eight swiftly drawn lines, a moral portrait, as it were, which I would gladly have a foreigner carry away with him as the likeness of the typical young Frenchman. Those who can measure its restraint, its depth, may know that they are capable of appreciating the best that our race has to offer.

'Sometimes,' writes Léo Latil, 'I find myself pursuing a dream; but for the most part I am one with my men, living their life with my whole heart. They are such splendid fellows, so many of them! And besides, I love this solitude with its tang of bitterness, these ceaseless mortifications of the flesh, these moods of the purified soul, ever ready for prayer.'

Thus, in the land of Saint Louis, of Jeanne d'Arc and Pascal, speaks a young soldier gently born, who combines, after

the high French manner, the three gifts of dreaming, of generosity, and of a soaring spirit. A perfect young man!

On the evening of September 27, 1915, Léo Latil fell at the edge of a German trench, west of the farm of Navarin, in Champagne, as he was leading the bayonet-charge of a section of the 67th Regiment, whose lieutenant had just been killed.

And now let us see and hear Alfred Cazalis, the son and grandson of missionary clergymen. Alfred Cazalis is the very spirit of tender, stirring orthodoxy, of dogma translated into charity and sympathy—a fine, lovable boy who says to God, 'To Thee I belong, and to all my brothers.' Eighteen years old, and bred in a very fervor of religion, he brings all his heart's devotion to his war-life, so pitifully short. To this noble young Calvinist, the vision comes in a remarkable form; but burning within is the longing,

shared alike by all these soldier-boys, to create a more transcendently lovely France.

'First and foremost,' he says, 'my preoccupation has been with the righteousness of this war. I know that our cause is just and good, and that the right is on our side. But this war must not be sterile; from all these deaths there must burst forth new life for mankind.

'I think ceaselessly of the France of to-morrow, of that young France whose hour is at hand. A consecrated France it must be, in which there will be no purpose in life save Duty. Men will live only in so far as they realize their duty and strive to fulfill it. And it is for us Protestants—or rather, for us believers—to reveal this new life to the world.

'Our duty, then, is to go forth as apostles. Our duty is plain; Jesus has defined it: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Perfect *through ourselves*—that is, developing our personali-

ties to their utmost limit, making them yield the last least thing of which they are capable, and bringing them up to the ideal stature of Christ. Then, too, perfect *through others* (for surely we believe in the communion of saints!), which means praying for them, that they may learn to bend conscience and will before the kingly will of God.'

These are his first thoughts; this is the abiding faith of this boy, steeped as he is in the religious spirit of his home. Day by day, during his short apprenticeship to life, he devotes himself passionately to learning the lesson of facts.

While in barracks, he writes,—

'I am trying to profit by these days of rest to prepare myself still more fully. I have time to read and meditate. Each morning, I try to get away to the hillsides to pray, and as evening comes on, I go to the church for a moment to collect my thoughts.'

Above all, however, he tries to know

what *action* means. 'I have often dreamed,' he writes, 'of that hour when I shall enter into reality.' One day, in the trenches, his thoughts turned to death, and he sought a remedy for it.

'I find it infinitely sweet, in moments like this, to feel that there are others close by us, who, if we should fall by the way, will snatch up and hold high the blazing torch which we have been carrying forward.'

Suddenly he breaks off, and the sinister birds take flight.

'Others!' he says. 'Have I not too much faith in life and its preciousness to be content with that hypothesis? It is not for death that I would prepare myself, but for life. For life eternal, no doubt, but for the more immediate matter of earthly life as well. When war is over and I go home, I must be a changed being. I shall have no right to be as I formerly was—or the lesson will have all been in vain. Through the

war mankind must be reborn, and is it not our duty to be reborn first of all?'

Thus he reconciles tragic eventualities with his young love of life; thus he decides that he will conquer, and that even beyond the grave he will toil on and pursue into eternity itself his earthly spiritual task.

'A grave moment is at hand. There is to be a bayonet charge. If I do not come back, one thing only I ask: may the tiny flame of consecrated fire which was in me descend upon those whom I loved and who loved me—upon all my comrades in faith and in toil.'

Then follows another utterance, equally sybilline:—

'Already I feel a change coming over me. The abstract being which was in me is falling asunder, and numberless realities of the spiritual order which were once mere phantoms are becoming flesh and blood to me through an experience which is renewed every instant. I am learning to live.'

What does this mean? What is this life whose meaning this boy is learning at the same time that he learns to die? That is the great secret. But I seem to listen in amazement to fresh accents from the shadowy young lips. Existence, he tells us, may be a ceaseless elimination, a progression, a development which commences here below and continues when the spirit, taking flight into the heavens, fully unfolds that which was its essential inner nature. Eternal life (if I understand this mysterious young Levite aright) is not rest, but a prolongation of the noble task begun on earth. Earthly life is a rough sketch, so to speak, of the deathless existence, and suffers no change of quality beyond the grave. After dissolution, men will continue to act. The young soldiers who have fallen for France will take up again the sacred work of their country.

Beneath these charmingly inadequate

words (one might fancy them a stumbling translation of the 'Cantique des Anges') I see with admiration how complete has been the victory, in these young hearts, of war-time discipline over the seething anarchy in which we found so much beauty only yesterday. What a wild yearning toward group-life! How urgent a need to form, across time and space, an indissoluble union with souls capable of creation! What a splendid determination to make one's self eternally at one with the best! Four days before his death this spiritual boy, stirred by some presentiment, set about coming to conclusions with his soul and recapitulating his deepest experiences:—

'First of all, my experience of men. In these hours when, every instant, one's life is in peril, they show themselves in their true colors, with no false semblance either of evil or of good. Everything within them that is mere factitious acquisition or pretense is sloughed off; and so

one gets to know men's souls under conditions that doubtless will never recur again.

'Then, my experience of the communion of saints. Never a moment when I did not feel close to my people, to all those that I love; never should I have believed that, in spite of great distances, they could seem as near as the men who are fighting at my side.

'Thus it was that I reached the greatest of the three experiences—a realization of the marvelous and incomparable worth of prayer.'

Four days later, on May 9, 1915, at Roclincourt in Artois, Alfred Cazalis died by the side of his lieutenant, in a bayonet-charge. His major, who was himself to fall three days later, wrote at the time to Pastor Cazalis, 'I mourn all my beloved young soldiers, but above all your son, who prayed with me the evening before battle.'

I rejoice in copying such pages as

these; I linger fondly over the yearning of these heroic young spirits; their thoughts follow no order save the ascending course of my admiration.

Jean Rival, at nineteen years of age, was an *aspirant* in the 14th Battalion of Chasseurs. Like Boisson, Cazalis, Latil, and all his other young brothers-in-arms, he was in love with life. In the midst of danger these young souls declare their love for light and space and movement and hope; but they put France first, and Jean Rival writes to a young kinswoman a letter in which the song of leave-taking, the eternal song of the twentieth year, is blended with and made secondary to the hymn of sacrifice accepted.

'I feel within me such an intensity of life, such a need of loving and of being loved, of unfolding, of admiring, of drawing great joyous breaths, that I cannot believe that death will lay hands

on me. And yet I know well that commanding a section is deadly perilous. To lead soldiers to battle is to make one's self a target. Many have fallen; many more will yet fall. I have just learned of the death of several comrades who came to the front only a short while ago as *aspirants*. If this should be my lot, I count on you, dear J——, to console my parents. You must tell them that I died facing the enemy, protecting France with my body, and that they did not bring their son to his twentieth year in vain, since they have given our country one more defender. Tell them that my blood has not flowed for nothing, and that the countless tragic sacrifices of individual lives will save the life of France.'

These boys wish no pity for their hard life; they do not ask to be spared or admired.

'I learned to my amazement,' he writes to his parents, 'that M—— went to see Captin V—— and Major de R—— about

me. That is too bad. Let M—— go about her own business and keep calm. And why do you always call me "poor" Jean? We have no liking to be pitied that way! Say "my dear Jean," or "good old Jean," or "little Jean"; but why "poor"? Is it because I am doing my duty like all my comrades?'

And what is his duty? What sort of life is he leading in the terrible sector of the *Tête de Faux?*

'We are within thirty or forty metres of the Boches. One can only move about in deep, narrow trenches, filled with mud and puddles of water separated by big stones, which give way under one's feet. A single shot may presage an attack. All night long I go the rounds, and when day comes I must oversee the trench-works, so that I haven't a moment to myself. I can hardly snatch a bit of sleep on damp straw, in a dug-out which I must enter on all fours. Nevertheless, our spirits are of the best.

'I am in command of a platoon—that is, two sections—my own and that of the adjutant, who has a shell-wound. The responsibility is considerable, but little by little one gets used to it. Only the reliefs are troublesome. You start off about midnight, follow through the black shadows of the pines a path filled with stones and slippery with sleet; keep dead silence; fall down; get up again; lose your way; find it once more; and, having ultimately arrived at your destination, station the sentries, send the men to bed, spot the trenches where the fighting is going on, in case of an attack; then finally fling yourself down on the straw, revolver close at hand—that is what a relief is!'

And yet listen to the joyous greeting which the young soldier sends forth from this abode of anguish and death. It is Easter Sunday, 1915.

'Happy Easter, Happy Easter! You must excuse this poor little letter; I am

no longer in the rest-camp, but in the first-line trench, in a gloomy dug-out where the rain beats in, and I can't stand up straight. I have the command of two sections now, so there is plenty to do. Still, I have time to tell you that all goes well, that I love you, and that I am content with my lot. Happy Easter!'

What an intensity of inner life is revealed by such a letter—still more by this exclamation which I take from another missive: 'Land of Alsace, which I love as dearly as my own Dauphiné!'

Is it not admirable, the spirituality of this outcry from a boy of twenty years, who, at his humble post, suffers night and day in the mire? Whence comes this sublimation of great-heartedness?

Listen to this utterance of a young French knight-errant, pure of heart:—

'Dear J——, how can I thank you for all the good you do me with those

letters of yours, so full of warm, cheering words, sweet as those of the elder sister I always longed for, and whom I find in you! What am I to do to prove myself grateful? Fight bravely, to defend you, to defend along with you all the maidens of France who to-day consecrate themselves to their brothers at the front! Fight bravely, to spare you the loathsome touch of these barbarians, whom we have been holding back here, one battalion against two, for a month and a half!

'On the day of the attack, dear J——, at the supreme moment when, at the signal of my captain, I shall go up and over the ramparts with my men, shouting, "*En avant, à la baionette!*"—at that superbly tragic moment when one stakes one's life, I shall think of you, rest assured of it. "Forward, boys, forward! At them, with the bayonet, for our sisters, the women of France!"'

This boy stands on the threshold of

all the paradises he has not yet known, and seeks to defend them, without one single thought of self. How faint grows the blazing song of the young Sophocles at Salamis beside this flame, which no base fuel nourishes! And all are alike! To the cry of Jean Rival, 'At them, with the bayonet, for our sisters, the women of France!' there comes the answering cry of young Bernard-Claudius Lavergne. On the 23d of May, 1915, in Artois, he shouts, 'The moment has come. Forward, with the bayonet, for France and our mothers!'

And this tender exaltation is joined to the soundest reason. These boys, whom a superficial passer-by might see wrapped in a roseate mist of enthusiasm, possess true wisdom, won not from theories, but from their own experience. Jean Rival realizes that he is an officer whose duty it is to forge the weapon of victory by fanning in his men the fire of cheerfulness. This boy of nineteen writes,

in the course of a familiar letter, a page of which historians of the war will do well to take note.

'If, taking it by and large, one may find (here at the front) a sane and noble spirit, it is utterly different from that which exists in the barracks and behind the lines. A spirit of unconsciousness and fatalism in some, of sober courage in others, and of cold resignation in others still. . . . For my part, I have always believed in the necessity of the "chosen few," but of a chosen few truly worthy of the name, pervaded by a sense of duty, influencing and educating the masses. The chosen few, at this present moment, are brave and firm of purpose; they are the leaders in the war, and it is they who will bring it triumphantly to an end, for the masses are, in general, long-suffering and enduring, yet easily stirred to glorious strife. The officer holds in his hand a mighty implement. If only he is a good workman—that is, if he pas-

sionately loves his profession and his country—be sure that he will turn out a masterpiece.'

The wonder is that this young warrior, who knows how to avoid cheap sentimentality and false demagogic claptrap, preserves the noble humanity of his soul. Herein lies the miracle of French reason, the divine pliancy of our race, when we are at our highest pitch of perfection.

'The mad pranks of our chasseurs at Grenoble? Yes, I know, but they are good fellows, nevertheless. If they know how to fight, they also know how to have their fun, and, upon my soul, who can reproach them for that? Here, too, when our men come into Plainfang after months in the trenches, they act like sailors returning from a long voyage. They kick over the traces: wine, cigars, merry songs—it's all part of the game. The officers can't get angry; in fact, they have no right to. What does it all

matter if, after these few irregularities, the rascals throw themselves heart and soul into the charge? Needless to tell you that the irregularities of your nephew are on a small scale. A glass or two of old wine, a few cigarettes, and also—to be frank with you—a few smiles at the Alsatian girls: that's all. Have no fear for the damnation of my soul.'

What say you to this? Was not old Nestor, so revered by those garrulous Greeks, a mere schoolboy by the side of this young non-commissioned officer of nineteen years? Blood-spattered experience joined to stainless purity of heart—was ever the like of this in the world before? One's admiration is blended with sorrow in reading a letter in which the boy tells how deeply stirred he has been by the sight of a village first-communion; then, abruptly changing the subject, he enjoins calmness and energy upon his family. Or still another letter, with its burden of charming gratitude, in which

this young soldier, who is giving his very life, grows solicitous lest the tiny sums sent him by his relatives can ill be spared from the modest home. Then, finally, there is that letter written on his father's birthday, in which he says, all forgetful of his own sacrifice, 'You may be sure that I understand the feelings of a father who sees his son of twenty years, whom he has reared at the cost of so much toil and care and thrift, setting out for the great Unknown of war.'

So it goes. Is it not splendid—this strong will dominating a tender, joyous heart?

And now, having taken stock of his ability, his courage, and the devotion of his men, he says, 'All is ready.' Here is his last letter to his young confidante:—

'Dear J——, to-morrow at dawn, to the strain of *Sidi Brahim* and the *Marseillaise*, we shall charge the German lines. The attack will probably finish me. On the evening before this great

day, which may be my last, I remind you of your promise. Keep up my mother's courage. For a week or more she will receive no news. Tell her that when an advance is at hand no soldier can write to his loved ones; he must content himself with thinking about them. And if the time goes by and she hears nothing of me, let her live in hope; keep up her courage. Then, if you learn at last that I have fallen on the field of honor, let your heart speak those words that will bring her solace.

'This morning I attended mass and took communion some few metres back of the trenches. If I die, I shall die as a Christian and a Frenchman.

'I believe in God, in France, in Victory. I believe in beauty, youth, and life.

'God guard me to the very end. But if my blood is needed for our triumph —Thy will be done, O Lord!'

If my only object were to make

known and beloved this young nature, at once so tender and so strong, I might feel that with these *ultima verba* my task was done; I might even have closed with the young soldier's acclamation of 'beauty, youth, and life.' I feel it a sort of holy duty, however, to transcribe every one of these words which do such high honor to our race. In Jean Rival and all his brothers-in-arms there is not the least preoccupation with glory; no wish save to do that which is right. They pour forth the fragrance of their souls with no thought of producing an effect—but they are the diadem of France; they must be seen by the whole world, not as a reward to them, who are beyond all recompense, but for the glory of our country.

The attack of Le Linge began on July 20, 1915, about eleven o'clock. At one o'clock, Jean Rival, leading his section, fell dead with a bullet in his forehead. He lies at rest in the sacred soil of Alsace.

I must stop. And how unwillingly I do so! There is a multitude of young soldiers, all the peers of those whom I have described. Every one of them should be heard.

Joseph Cloupeau, who died on the field of honor at nineteen, said, 'How good it is to be of some use, even if one must pay for it with one's life!' And, revealing in that dawn the beauty of a harmonious life, he was able to declare, 'I am not a Christian and a soldier; I am a Christian soldier.'

Young Alfred Aeschiman, who died for France just before leaving the military *dépôt* of Aubagne, was walking one Sunday in February, 1915, through pine woods and sun-soaked groves of olives. 'How hard it is to accept death when one is twenty years old!' he murmured. 'I must never cease to keep before me the great ideals for which I am going to fight; and compare the worth of a mean, impure personality with that of the moral

principles, which are the glory of the human race.'

The young volunteer Paul Guieysse (he has since fallen on the battlefield) confides to the friend who accompanies him to the recruiting-station, 'I love life so dearly that if I did not have unswerving faith in the immortality of the soul, perhaps I might hesitate to enlist.'

Michel Penet, a boy of nineteen, in the 8th Regiment of *Chasseurs à pied*, writes,—

'If only you could have been with me when the volunteers were called for! The lieutenant was there, with a copy of the ministerial decree in his hand. "Who wishes to join the army of invasion?" In a moment every arm was raised; there was but a single cry, "I do! I do!" It was more than mere patriotism that set all those caps waving in the air; it was more than mere hatred for the German nation; it was *vengeance*. I have seen soldiers argue

with their officers because they would not let them go; I have seen some of them weeping with rage. Every one of us has his quota of deaths to avenge.'

This 8th regiment had already been sent forward under fire eight times. Their lieutenant said to his men, 'You know, all of you, that the chasseurs are not made to live.' Joyously the young soldier goes out to meet his destiny. 'I am going forward with full confidence in the divine mercy,' he says. 'Of course it is hard to make such a sacrifice when one is not yet twenty. That is the age when life is good to live. To-morrow we shall be in the Argonne; it will be a struggle to the finish. I shall fight for France, offering my heart to God; and when evening comes and the battle is over, I shall be resting for a few moments, and my thoughts will go out to you, who love me so much, and whom I love still more dearly. When night comes, our hearts will be united.' Of his march to

the firing-lines, he says, 'The thing that impressed me most deeply was the old women. How many of them I saw wiping their eyes as they watched our splendid battalion swing by!' By the 20th of April, 1915, he had reached the trenches, and on May 29 he met a hero's end.

Only the dead have spoken to us here. This is seemly; we need put no curb on our praise. The living, however, are in every way their peers. Though they have not received the supreme consecration, theirs is the compensating glory of continuous service. All these splendid boys, scarcely emerged from childhood, are part and parcel of their generation; in them its beauty comes to full flower; they pour forth its fragrance before the action of time hardens them into individuals. Lithe bodies, sensitive and gentle souls, in whom strength has awakened before its season, truth-loving and modest unto

humility, knowing well their honor and their duty, these soldiers of seventeen, eighteen, twenty years are truly 'sons of France,' as an admiring world calls them. 'Weariness?' they say in unison. 'It is a matter of energy, of moral resistance, rather than physical strength.' Every one of their biographies would tell of the deepening of the soul; and in the inner sanctuary of all these different souls there burns the same fire.

Have you noticed that they speak constantly of God—that they pray?

Captain André Cornet-Anquier, a Protestant soldier who died for France, tells us: 'A Catholic captain said the other day that he prayed before every engagement. The major observed that it was no time for such things, and that he would do better to attend to his orders. "Major," replied the other man, "it doesn't prevent me from taking my orders and fighting, and I feel the stronger for it." Then I broke in: "Captain, I

do as you do, and I also am strengthened."'

'Those happen to be two believers,' you will say. 'There are always some of *them* to be found.' Yes, but they are men of different religions, and they agree. About what? *A fact.* What does prayer mean to these soldiers? They tell us that it is something which makes them stronger; that they draw virtue from it. We have all read about such things, but these two men speak from their own experience.

Fifteen years ago, in a conversation which I shall never forget, the great explorer Stanley told me, to my amazement, that in Africa, whenever he was perplexed, in torment, or in peril, he opened his Bible and found guidance there. 'Oh, yes,' I said to myself at the time, 'he is an Anglo-Saxon.' Nevertheless, the difference in nationality does not explain everything. To-day we see our fellow countrymen, our neighbors,

the children of our flesh, placed in circumstances that stir the depths of their being, feeling, and reasoning as they stirred that Englishman. My friend Captain Hassler, older than any of these boys and a stranger to their faith, looked about him and wrote, 'One cannot close one's eyes to the fact that many men are sustained by the idea of a superior being to whose care they entrust themselves.'

Noble is this *jungamus dextras* of these loyal soldiers; and beneficent this serene submission of believer and unbeliever alike to the great Fact; but my wonder goes far beyond this. The spirit of religion pervades this whole younger generation. They are not all equally sustained by it; certainly they are not all of the same creed, but history, in speaking of them, will use the words of Léo Latil: 'In this war the spiritual element dominates all.'

Whence do they come, these soldier-

boys *san peur et sans reproche?* The Judge's daughter in Scripture said, 'We ask of you a brief respite to bewail our youth.' *They* crave not a single tear. What luminous presence, what eyes full of calm, what sublime thoughts, rising without turmoil to the surface of their beings! Are these really our young brothers? Twice have they been born: first out of the soil of France, from an old race whose sons are noble, one and all; and again out of the nation's peril. A French mother (and French mothers are the tenderest, the most timid in the world) said to her son, 'I should urge you on with my own voice, if I could see you rushing to meet the enemy.' These boys are heirs to the ancient treasure; countless virtues slumbered within them, and to-day they are all awake.

As we watch them act and think, we are present at the resurrection of these forces that were slumbering. Tracts of the French soul which had long lain

fallow in us are beginning to be fruitful once again; and these young men have won inner riches which we, their elders, have lost. Foregoing nothing of that which was *our* treasure (for their positive aptitudes, their sense of surface realities, are at least as great as ours), they leave no darkness in the more mysterious parts of their beings; they have rediscovered the secret of the Ages of Enthusiasm. By this token they are more complete natures than we, and come nearer to fulfilling the type of man made perfect.

Acceptance of sacrifice, the consciousness of a great Presence at one's side—we come across these again and again. If we need a picture to symbolize them, none more true to life can be found than that evoked by a sentence which Bernard-Claudius Lavergne, the thirteenth child of the glazier Claudius Lavergne, wrote home to his family: 'To-night we leave for the trenches. To-night I shall be

watching over you, rifle in hand. You know who is watching over me.'

What an epitome! What a thought beyond price! O young men of France, worthier far than we!

They shall live on; but even were they dead, our country shall be built anew with their souls, as with living stones.

Juventus Christi

By Anne C. E. Allinson

'THE spring has gone out of the year,' said Pericles, in speaking of young men who had died in battle for Athens. Always it is the death of the young which brings the greatest gloom. As the war goes on, we think with stark horror of the sacrifice of youth, the frustration of promise and of hope. The war-god, indeed, is not the only Moloch which devours the spring of the year, the flower of the nations. Disease, whether born of our ignorance or imposed upon us by Nature, the arch-vivisectionist, never stays its hand as the generations come and go. Young men and women in their bloom, boys and girls in their first burgeoning, and tender little children die on every day through the relentless centuries. But, except when our own are taken, we are apt to obliterate the

consciousness of a tragedy enacted in silence. Now our minds are shocked into attention by the roar of guns. The war has made eternal topics current. We feel impelled to try to answer the questions which are raised by this perennial catastrophe, the death of youth.

'Yours is a wholesome sorrow, of God's own laying-on.' This was written to one whose mother had just died, full of years and beauty and honor. Only the ignorant or the stupid feel any bitterness when old age exchanges life for death. The old who have lived rightly go willingly, and those who have loved them rightly feel only a grief which brings understanding to the mind and health to the soul. But when the young die, a drop of poison embitters the cup of sorrow. We ask 'Why?' Through rebellion the soul sickens. Not God but the Devil lays his hand upon us. In trying to throw off this evil

weight, let us understand clearly wherein our bitterness consists.

Impulsive rebellion, when youth dies, is tripartite. We deem it cruel that the young should lose life; that their fathers and mothers, or their young brides and lovers, should be frustrated of hopes; and, finally, that by their death we all lose the poems, the music, or the pictures which they might have created, the inventions which they might have devised, the discoveries by which they might have illuminated our darkness. But if we slowly think the matter out, only the first element in our anger abides to torture us. For if it should prove not to be a bitter thing that the young must surrender years of living, then those who love them rightly will in time forget their own frustration and find the waters of sorrow sweetened. And if we cease to think of individuals and survey the course of history, we perceive that our poetry and music and science will not

die with these lips and ears and hands. Their poems, their violins, their machines —ah, others will take their place. 'Though we are all killed, there will be songs again,' the Irish poet, departing for the front, has bidden us remember.

> Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,

humanity arises and builds again. And so we are brought back to the injustice done to the young themselves as the origin of our anguished and rebellious 'Why?'

The frequency of this question is a proof of the deep-seated optimism of the race. In poetry and philosophy, from time to time, we play with the idea of life as the City of Dreadful Night and with death as the Great Deliverer; but when our young die we feel that they have been betrayed. A man who had been convinced both of the evil of this world and of the goodness of a world beyond the grave, when his chil-

dren died within one year, exclaimed, 'They have been cheated out of happiness, to which they had a right!' This cry is probably echoed by almost every father and mother who loses children. Pessimism rolls from us. We know that if our children are deprived of life they are deprived of something good.

There is, indeed, a beautiful and familiar story which seems to congratulate youth on an escape from life. It is told by Herodotus, that prince of story-tellers, whose golden magic resolves psychological abstractions into vivid personalities. Crœsus and Solon are discussing happiness, and the millionaire is hoping that the sage will at least allot him the second place among happy mortals. But no, that belongs to two quite ordinary Argives, Cleobis and Biton, who died young.

'There was a great festival in honor of the goddess Hera at Argos, to which their mother must needs be taken in a

car. Now, the oxen did not come home from the field in time; so the youths, fearful of being too late, put the yoke on their own necks, and themselves drew the car in which their mother rode. Five-and-forty furlongs did they draw her, and stopped before the temple. This deed of theirs was witnessed by the whole assembly of worshipers, and then their life closed in the best possible way. Herein, too, God showed forth most evidently, how much better a thing for man death is than life. For the Argive men stood thick around the car and extolled the vast strength of the youths; and the Argive women extolled the mother who was blessed with such a pair of sons; and the mother herself, overjoyed at the deed and at the praises it had won, standing straight before the image, besought the goddess to bestow on Cleobis and Biton, the sons who had so mightily honored her, the highest blessing to which mortals can attain.

Her prayer ended, they offered sacrifice, and partook of the holy banquet, after which the two youths fell asleep in the temple. They never woke more, but so passed from the earth.' [1]

The story is so exquisite that we yield to its persuasion. We say that even in the bright optimism of the Greeks experience wove a strand of 'divinest melancholy'; that they, too, after all, questioned the joy of life and perceived the kindliness of death. 'Whom the gods love die young' became a proverb among a people profoundly convinced of this world's glory and profoundly uncertain of another world's charm. Statues of Cleobis and Biton were set up by the Argives at Delphi. There, preserved in a museum, we may see them yet, perhaps on a spring day when poppies and mallows are to be found among the ruins of Apollo's holy city, and new green leaves

[1] Translation by Rawlinson.

cover the trees in the valley below Parnassus. In them the spring is eternalized.

Fancies such as this spring from our æsthetic sense. They are a part of our response to beauty in any form. We see the palpable loveliness of youth unmarred by age, of promise undisturbed by satiety. Death is an artist, like the maker of a Grecian urn, immortalizing his subject at the moment of perfection.

> Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
> Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
> And happy melodist, unwearièd,
> For ever piping songs for ever new;
> More happy love! more happy, happy love!
> For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
> For ever panting and for ever young.

But in the critical hours of sorrow—hours now so constant with us—any such æsthetic evaluation of life and death seems to vanish. A subconscious belief in life's goodness rises and immerses us. We want our young to have

their three-score years. With all the labor and sorrow? Yes, even so.

If we turn back to the Greeks, we notice that the lovely story of the Argive boys was only an illustration of a happiness which surpasses the happiness derived from wealth and despotic power. Cleobis and Biton were, indeed, happier than Crœsus, but they held only the second place in a general rating of happy mortals. A certain Tellus of Athens was deemed by Solon to be the most happy. 'First, because his country was flourishing in his days, and he himself had sons both beautiful and good, and he lived to see children born to each of them, and these children all grew up.' Life piled on life was best of all. To live long and to beget goodly life in a flourishing state, this was in reality the highest blessing.

But the Athenian sage's verdict is incomplete without his second reason for giving the palm to Tellus. Life cannot be judged except by adding death to it.

A man's achievement includes with the manner of his living the manner of his dying. Now, the end of Tellus was 'surpassingly glorious. In a battle between the Athenians and their neighbors near Eleusis, he came to the assistance of his countrymen, routed the foe and died upon the field most gallantly.'

After the Platonic manner, let us for a time follow the argument whithersoever it leads. If the end is so important, constituting in itself one half of human happiness, then, it would seem, there must be comfort among those in Europe whose sons are dying gallantly for their countries upon the field. Such a death must be drawing the poison from sorrow, eradicating rebellion from bereaved hearts. It is a stupendous fact that until very late in history this logic would have remained unquestioned. Herodotus in his story of Tellus appealed to a universal popular belief. Æschylus, a spiritual prophet, when as an old man he wrote his own

epitaph, omitted all mention of his poetry —his life-work—and commemorated the fact that forty years before he had risked his life at Marathon. Horace, a man of the world, used his incomparable language to perpetuate through centuries the sweetness and the ethical rightness of dying for one's country:—

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.

In journeying from paganism to Christianity, the western world merely carried this sentiment with it as a *vade mecum*. With the Roman have agreed saints and sinners, idealists and materialists, serfs and citizens. And even today only a certain few would dispute him. With him still agree millions of men and women, of sons and parents, who are united in a willing sacrifice. 'When your children die in battle, at least you do not have to ask why'—this is taken from a recent letter of a German mother who had lost her eldest and was sending forth her last son. Unsympathetic as the major part of

our world is with the Prussian theory of the state, here is ground for a common, human understanding. Mothers in England and France and Russia, in Belgium and Serbia, are comforted by the same acquiescence. American mothers have been so comforted in the past, and will be again, when they are brought to the test. All over Europe millions are undisturbed by the 'ethics' of war, as distinguished from other forms of patriotic service, and gladly make the sacrifice of life for their countries, on demand. For those who are left behind, grief is unpoisoned by rebellion. Age-old comfort brings peace to their hearts.

II

Now, the duty to go to war at the country's call does not rest only upon a Spartan or a Roman or a Prussian basis. Its potential quixotic individualism might have found expression (had the subject been debatable in those days) in the theory of the state held by Socrates, a citizen of a pure democracy. He made this theory clear when he was facing another kind of sacrifice. Imprisoned and condemned to an unjust death, he was urged by his friends to escape. It is quite possible that the Athenian democracy would have connived at such a miscarriage of its hasty verdict. But to the idealist his life seemed of no importance in comparison with preserving those laws which are the breath of life to the state. Under the protection of laws he had been decently born, and educated, and initiated into every pleasure and privilege of his life. In an open trial he had had his

chance to convince the laws that he ought to live. Since he had failed, it was his duty to die. What if, in his case, the verdict was wrong? Better than his life was obedience to the courts, the instruments of justice. 'This, dear Crito,' he said to his pleading friend, there in the stone prison in the early dawn, 'this is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice, I say, is humming in my ears and prevents me from hearing any other. . . . Leave me, then, Crito, to fulfill the will of God and to follow whither he leads.'

Without doubt, if Socrates had been brought into contact with pacifists for conscience' sake (a breed unknown in the pagan world), he would have used these same arguments of reasoned and voluntary obedience to laws which are merely asking a return for their fostering care. 'Either persuade your country

that she is wrong or obey her call to battle,' he would say to a resistant of conscription. When the Quaker answered, 'But I must, rather, obey God who forbids war'; and the modern Philosopher answered, 'I must obey Reason which forbids war,' what would have been the reply of the Athenian who worshiped God as reverently and lived by Reason as consistently as any man in the world's history?

Ah! between his imaginable answer and ours there lie the centuries in which, through storm and blight, there yet has fructified a theory of the state in relation to humanity calculated to obliterate war altogether. Whether they admit it or not, rationalists as well as defenders of a faith are subject to an idea of world-brotherhood which was promulgated, for the first time with consistency and passion, by the earliest Christians. We must acknowledge that they were men with no national life of their own. Jews and

Greeks of that period had reason to give their deepest love to the New Jerusalem coming down from God, or to a city-state of the spirit, a commonwealth in heaven. Only when Romans—the masters of the world—became Christians, did patriotism take on the guise of a Christian virtue, a Christian emotion. But the vision of the conquered has outlived the power of the conquerors. Even among powerful modern nations have been found certain men and women who have looked beyond their countries to humanity, and whose first allegiance has been given to laws beyond those of the state.

Among these the most conspicuous and consistent have been the Quakers. Philosophers who have suffered for Reason what Quakers have suffered for God are too sporadic to concern us here. Or, rather, they may, for the purposes of the argument, be included with the band of Christians whose convictions and practice are written in history. In

our own country Quakers sacrificed to God the political power which they possessed before the Revolution. In England to-day, as in the past, they will, at any moment, suffer obloquy and imprisonment rather than take part in war. They love their country and would thankfully convince her, but, since they fail, they must be true to God, rather than to her. Under no conditions whatsoever will they admit the ethical fitness of men killing each other. A patriotism or a justice which seems to demand this is illusory. They do not hold their own lives dear, but they believe that a man's life ought never to be taken by a fellow man. This is a sin against the Holy Spirit. Rather than kill another man in battle, a Quaker will allow himself to be killed as a traitor. Like Socrates, he says that it is better to suffer injustice than to do injustice, and like Socrates he has proved to us that he means what he says.

This nobility of Quakerism is the completest antithesis to the noble patriotism of the millions who willingly march away from home to fight for mother-country or fatherland. Yet the two antipodal ideas involve equally a clear assurance of duty. In this they both lack a specifically modern quality of thought. The patriotic soldier has forebears from the dawn of history. The Quaker is as lucid and sure as a fifth-century Greek. A certain group of moderns, however, are not sure what their convictions are. Characteristic of our own day is an agonizing confusion of thought. Action, therefore, entails a peculiar torture of soul. Deep in the hearts of many burns a love of country, while bright in their souls glows a heavenly star. Reason expounds to some of them, Love pleads with others, that violence is wrong. And yet both Reason and Love seek to rid the world of evil. Is war a flail of God or a scourge of the

devil? Does it beget righteousness or spawn fresh sin?

Men of this kind do not stay away from war. Conviction must be crystal-clear and granite-strong to overcome the primitive call to join,

> when the order moves the line
> And the lean, locked ranks go roaring down to die.

Yes, these men go to the front themselves or send their sons—but with an ever-deepening consciousness that the need is only apparent, the ethical rightness an illusion, the responsibility their own. They cannot believe with Lord Dunsany that 'war is no accident that man's care could have averted, but is as natural though not as regular as the tides.' Rather, even in the act of offering up their sons, they say to one another, 'It is you and I who must stop these wars, these massacres of boys.'

These words will be recognized as Mr. Britling's when, late at night, after his boy's death, he was trying to write

to the German father whose son also had been killed, a son who had lived in the Britling household, sat at the table, and clinked glasses with Hugh. Mr. Wells has immortalized for us the small group who to-day do ask 'Why?' when their sons die in battle. Over against the other millions, men like Mr. Britling are few in number. But their articulateness makes them significant. Their torn consciences affect ourselves, so that we both reverence the men who fight, and curse the civilization which allows them to fight.

To this point has the argument brought us. Our riddle is still unsolved. Even when the young die 'upon the field most gallantly,' our first thought is not with Simonides, that glorious is their doom and beautiful their lot. 'Can one write anything,' asks a sensitive young American, himself a poet, 'which could bring comfort to the friends of Rupert Brooke?' In no other age would the soldier's death

of Brooke, at twenty-eight, have seemed even more tragic than the consumptive's death of Keats, at twenty-six. From these two shining youths let the argument again lead us on.

The genius of the one has already been established by Time, the Inspector-General of men's work; while the genius of the other has only to-day been brought home to us by his death. But each, in his swift passage here, had Beauty for his bride, and each now lies in a

> corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England.

In Rome, near the ancient wall and pyramid, under the tall Italian cypresses, the grave of Keats is one of our holy places, giving the lie to the shallow inscription on his tombstone, 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.' And Rupert Brooke lies buried, as befits a youth who in his person had the 'bloom and charm' of the Greeks, in a grave in Scyros, in the Ægean, 'amid

the white and pinkish marble of the isle, the wild thyme and the poppies, near the green and blue waters.' Our thoughts of the two graves together bring us back from the war—a temporary episode for all its cataclysmic enormity—to the perennial, diurnal death of the young. War, as a cause, used to furnish an answer to the question 'Why?' To-day it only intensifies the bitterness of a certain group of men and women. But in numbers this group is matched by those of us who assume the same grim responsibility for disease. Because we are either ignorant or dilatory, because our defenses are false or because we do not make enough haste with them, Charon drives the youths before him and 'bears the tender little ones in a line at his saddle-bow.'

But this way madness lies. It is sane and right for us to work, as a generation, in great organized movements, toward both peace and health. But for

an individual to blame himself for the destruction that lays waste the world savors of megalomania, of a delusion of omnipotence. Vast forces are at work, beyond our will, beyond our ken. They take from us 'the inheritors of unfulfilled renown' whom Shelley joined with Keats, and in whose ranks he, too, soon came to be numbered. War, disease, cruel accident, the mistakes or the hideous injustice of men—multiform tentacles of evil, they reach out and grasp the young of all ages. Eagerly we project our imagination toward a day when these powers and we shall be reconciled, when 'there shall be no more curse.' The strength of our desire for it, as an impulse to action, will hasten the coming of this dayspring. Chief among its glories, we feel, will be the freedom of all to sow and to garner the joys of living, to pass from youth to age and on to a tranquil and a timely death. Then there will be no violent slaying of the

immature. But here and now falls the night of our sorrow.

Here and now, therefore, need we be rebellious? Is the death of the young poisonous to our faith in Life? We are not seeking for courage. The bitterest may display unconquerable souls within the pit that covers them. Nor are we seeking for mere acceptance, whether that of the 'believer' who abides by the Lord's will, or that of the philosopher who identifies his will with the Universal. In our desolation we are in search of a warm, sweet intimacy with truth, a companionship with its realities, a comrade's understanding.

We start out on our quest again, freed from some of our confusions. And here at our threshold, amazing in its simplicity, is revealed our own conviction of the valuelessness of calendar months and years. We cease talking around an assigned theme, and suddenly realize that we do not value the quantity

of life as we supposed we did. All of us, learned and simple, rich and poor, militants and pacifists, agnostics and pietists, face to face with the question, would choose to have our children die good rather than live wicked. We may wish them to have the labor and sorrow of life, but never its sin.

To state the case is to prove it. 'Without controversy,' said Paul to the young Timothy, 'great is the mystery of godliness.' The incontrovertible mystery of our own preference for godliness over length of years is of searching import in our discussion. The prison statistics of America show that among the thousands who are incarcerated yearly the enormous majority are under thirty years of age. If we took time to look at the charts whose black fingers stretch accusingly up toward our boys of eighteen and twenty, our horror would transcend our despair over the 'shambles of Europe.' We are sleepless for thinking of unknown

parents who await in dread news of a death at the front. We pay little attention to the fathers and mothers who are dreading to see a new manifestation of sin or weakness. And yet Mr. Britling (for all his perplexity about war) is happier when Hugh dies than is the father of a rake who wallows in the trough of life. 'It was the right spirit,' he said to his boy, who had enlisted a year and three good months before his country would have asked him to leave his father. The death of sons and daughters is not the worst calamity that can befall their parents. Perhaps in the crowd at Golgotha the mother of Judas envied Mary as she stood below her crucified son.

In a blinding flash, as if we ourselves stood at this place of a skull, the revelation comes. Through a glass darkly we have been peering at the meaning of the *quality* of human life. Now, as the man on the cross bows his head and gives up the ghost, we know that in his quality

we are shown God. 'Our sons who have shown us God'—so the father's vigil of questioning sorrow ends. Quantity, months and years, is of men, temporal, measurable, coming to an end. Quality is eternal, unchangeable, without end and without death. Jesus himself was still young; not a boy, indeed, but far short of his meridian. As far as his work went, he had been busy for only three years. He seemed not even to have made a beginning when he was taken and slain. His mother had to give him up, not to war or to disease, but to the hatred of a few men in authority. His vigor, his charm, his pleasure in the friendly intimacies and common things of life, his loving-kindness which made him so beautiful to live with and was beginning to draw men to him, all the blossom and flower of his early manhood seemed, to her, lost. And yet from the day of his death are dated backward and forward the calen-

dar years of history. This is because he and no other, in wholeness, revealed the divinity in humanity, the timelessness of the spirit's life. The son whom Mary watched upon his cross incarnated the Christ of the soul, who was before Abraham, and who shall be even if the Christianity of men is consumed like the grass of the field.

Jesus endeavored to show to men that the quality of the soul is like a well of water springing up into everlasting life. 'He that believeth on me *hath* eternal life'—so a disciple who understood him quotes one of his sayings. In all language there is no such godlike present tense, heedless of the illusion we call time, oblivious of the incident of the flesh, the episode of the grave. Now, as Jesus moved about among men and women he found his manifestation of the spirit most often among the tenderly young. Once, when his grown followers were discussing points

of the moral law, he asked them to make way for some children who were being brought to him. They were so little that he could take them up in his arms, and he pointed to them and said, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.' What greater glory could life have brought to those little boys and girls? All the wonderful or joyful things they might do hereafter would be non-essentials, quantitative elements in a temporal span. Already they were chalices of the Spirit. The young master who believed this of them had himself, when he was a boy of twelve, been about his Father's business, and was soon to die while youth was still his. Yet 'in him was life; and the life was the light of men.'

From him there falls a radiance, in human story, upon all the young who, whether they have known Christ by name or not, have had within them a well of water springing up into everlast-

ing life. In the child it may be a spring of purity and love, in the youth a spring of courage and self-conquest—diversities of gifts, but the same God. What if such youth shall die? 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.' With these deathless words in our ears, we awake from our vision. The crowds at Golgotha are gone. Mary and her son are seen no longer. We walk back into our own brief day of sorrow.

And coming back purified, we understand, at last, amid our immediate and terrible experience of war, what our own young are saying to us. The few who have the gift of tongues say it in word as well as act; the inarticulate millions say it in brave deeds, from the unquestioning patriot to the Quaker who on errands of mercy exposes his body to the shot and shell of foe and friend alike. The war may be unjustifiable, unforgivable, but within its reality we

must listen to-day for the current form of eternal topics. Indeed, in the matter of words, under no other conditions can youth so clearly show us its own heart lifted 'above its mortal lair.' Outside of war the brave young do not voluntarily surrender their lives, except in unforeseen heroic hours, allowing for no previous written meditation. Through this special way, therefore, of offering up their flesh, they tell us most distinctly what they believe about the spirit. Look at them! How gallantly, how brightly they outride our stormy grief!

Juventus mundi, destroyed by death, forgotten in the grave, how bitter a thing is its transitoriness!

Juventus Christi—O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The Soul's Experience

By Sir Francis Younghusband

THERE is no need to dwell upon the greatness of the present time. We are well enough aware that never in its whole history has humanity been stirred as it is now; that never before has human faculty, capacity, and endurance been so stretched; that never have men shown greater bravery and more willing self-sacrifice, or nations closer unity. We are living in incomparably the greatest times that have ever been, in the most momentous year of all history. And we know that upon our actions now, upon the degree of wisdom we have exercised in the choice of our ideals, and upon the vigor, courage, and steadfastness with which we pursue them, will depend the course of humanity, for good or ill, for many long years to come. All this we recognize, and it fortunately needs no emphasis.

But when the welfare of future generations thus depends so much upon what we of the present day do, the old and crucial question must recur to us with redoubled force and must call for clear and convincing answer: Are we or are we not being directed from above by some All-wise, Omnipotent, and Perfect Being who knows all and sees all and can do all, and who, being good, may be trusted to do for us what is best? In these critical times can our public men, our statesmen, our naval and military commanders rely for aid and guidance upon such a Being?

In the inconceivably intricate questions which present themselves continually to our statesmen, can they expect to be shown their way through? When many alternative courses open up, each with its advantages and disadvantages so evenly balanced, can the responsible leaders of a nation expect to be shown the only right one? When a commander is on the eve of attacking or of being attacked, can he

count upon being supported by an Omnipotent Being? These thousands and millions of men who are daily risking their lives must clearly be actuated by motives which they honestly believe are good; they are therefore deserving of the support of any Omnipotent Ruler who is also good. Can they safely reckon upon the support of any such Being? Can individual men and women, can nations, can the human race safely depend, in this the greatest crisis of the human race, upon being protected from dangers, diverted from wrong courses, supported and guided on right courses by One who has the power and the will to lead man and men aright?

Without referring to living men (although a prominent instance is ready to hand) we can find a conspicuous example of one not so long dead, who led his country in most critical times and profoundly influenced the destinies of many other countries, and who did hold the belief

that the actions of men were guided from above. Bismarck's letters to his wife and to his son, written during the Franco-Prussian War, are now available, and they abound in reference to the Deity. After one of the early victories, he writes, 'The campaign will be as good as over, unless God visibly intervenes on behalf of the French, which, I am confident, will not happen.' He speaks of Sedan as 'a victory for which we must thank the Lord our God in all humility.' He refers to the Emperor Napoleon III as being 'cut down by God's almighty hand.' He tells his wife to 'trust in God, who has preserved our children from the very jaws of death.' And when his son complains about being sent to a dépôt squadron, he writes to him, 'I am too superstitious a father to do anything about it, but let things go as God ordains.' There is hardly a letter in which God is not mentioned.

Bismarck genuinely believed that the affairs of men were ordered by an Omnip-

otent Autocrat above. And hundreds of millions of men think as Bismarck did. Most, indeed, of those who are now directing nations think so. And so also do those who are fighting their battles. Have they any real and proper justification for their belief? This is the momentous question we have to ask ourselves, and in a short article we can do little more than raise it and emphasize its importance. But we can at least show that it has not been finally answered yet, and indicate the reply that we ourselves would give.

That the majority of men believe that their lives are ordered and that the world is governed by some Ruler above must be admitted. Yet most would also admit that in this majority few have ever thought this question out or done anything else than accept as true the beliefs which have been handed down to them by their forefathers. Again, it would be acknowledged that a man of affairs like Bismarck would most certainly feel that

men really were being swayed by some invisible agency in whose presence even one so powerful as he would seem powerless. But when he assumed that this power was exercised by some Being external to men, he may not have thought the matter out very thoroughly, but have merely accepted the ideas in which he was brought up. Most men do accept this belief on trust; and so might we all, as we would accept the law of gravitation, and not trouble to examine the grounds for our belief, if there were general agreement among those who really have gone into the question.

But in regard to a belief that the world is governed and controlled by a Being external to it, there is no such agreement among leading thinkers as there is among scientists regarding the law of gravitation. Some of the deepest and clearest thinkers do not admit the existence of such a Person. The Unseen Power which even a Bismarck would feel that he had to

reckon with, they would say might come from within, not from without,—from within the world and from within men, and not from outside. And they would see in the want of perfection in any direction whatever, or in one single individual or any part of an individual and at any time, and in the prevalence of imperfection at all times and everywhere, a staggering objection to the view that this world can have been planned, created, and governed by any Being who was both good and all-powerful. We are running great risks, therefore, if we unquestioningly accept such a belief simply because it was handed down to us by our forefathers; and before we hand it on to our children, to guide them in the still more complex lives which they will have to lead, we should make really certain of our ground for holding it.

I will not restate here the objections which have been urged; but I would briefly outline an alternative conception of things which, as it seems to me, better

accords with our observation and experience of the world. It is that the Power which a man feels acting on him, and which he can see is acting on other men and throughout the world, is not exerted by any outside Being, but is something welling up from within the world and working through men and forcing them on toward perfection. Though no single thing or person has yet reached perfection, a view over this earth's history so far back as we know it—say over five hundred million years—does show a considerable progress. And it seems more natural to hold that the world contains within itself, as part of its nature and constitution, that which orders it and constrains it toward perfection, than to conceive of it as being operated upon by some one outside it. So we would not have in our minds the conception of a Creator, Artificer, and Organizer on the one hand, and, on the other, heaps of inert matter and swarms of men and animals, and of

the Artificer fashioning the material into shape, ordering the men this way and that, inciting them to do this and restraining them from doing that, pushing them forward in one direction and holding them back in another. For we find, as a matter of scientific observation, that no particles of matter, however small, are in the faintest degree inert, but that all, down to the minutest and simplest, are intensely active—and active on their own account—'behaving' strictly in accordance with the dictates of their own inherent nature.

We find further that no one is isolated, standing or moving by itself, uninfluencing or uninfluenced by the others, but that all are interconnected and form a united whole. The interrelatedness of things is the one fundamental fact which science and philosophy have established. All things are interrelated; all things mutually influence each other. The world does not consist of masses of inert nonentities which would lie motionless and inactive unless

they were manipulated by some external agent, pushed this way or pulled that, raised up here, pressed down there. It consists of myriads of intensely active—and self-active—entities, with properties and characteristics of their own, all mutually influencing one another to form a real unity. And when we find, as we do, at least on the earth, that the state of things is improving, it is quite as reasonable to assume that it contains within itself that which brings about improvement, as to suppose that an external agent, operating upon it from outside, produced this result. And if we discover further, as some believe they have found, that man himself has risen from the animals, that animals and plants have arisen from microscopic and simplest forms of life, and these from complex chemical compounds, and so on back and back to the simplest ultimate particles of matter, then man also would be interconnected with the rest, would be part with it of one whole; and

would have been uplifted to where he is by that same Spirit which, emanating from the parts, animates the whole, and which, driving on through all the ages, has been making persistently for better and better things.

We were accustomed in our childhood to think of a Creator, Maker, and Ruler, a vague Personage residing remotely in the skies; to think of this earth as something solid and material and everlasting which was 'made' by this distant Person, and upon which He now looks *down* as an aviator might from his machine; and to think of ourselves as having also been made and fashioned in some mysterious way by this Being and set upon this earth, and as being there governed and guided by Him.

This is roughly the idea of things which we bring with us from our childhood and which has been handed down to us, generation by generation, from the childhood of the race.

But in the new conception of things which is forming as we grow older and better informed, this Creator, the earth, and we men all merge into one spiritual process. We find that we ourselves sprang from the earth and in the course of millions of years have arisen from its very bosom and from nowhere else. We discover that what was once a fiery mist has so developed to what we see around us to-day, with all its varied plant and animal life, and with us men and women as the crowning flower so far reached, because it has always borne within it, emanating from its individual component parts, in their mutual influence upon one another, a spring, a vital impulse, an impetus ever bursting upward; because it was so composed and constituted that it had by its very nature to go on reconstituting itself better, in much the same way as the pliable and plastic British Constitution is constantly remodeling itself from within through the activities of individual Englishmen in their mutual in-

fluence upon one another, and through their being animated with the spirit of England, to which their mutual influence gives rise.

Those who hold the later view will be inspired to an intense degree with the sense of unity. They will know that it will be a unity of differences, and they will expect that as the unity of the whole grows closer, so also will the diversity of the parts. They know that for individuals (men or nations) to maintain and develop their individuality, healthy opposition, conflict, struggle, and controversy are necessary, whether by war or only by words. But the point they will have at the back of their minds is the fundamental unity which exists along with this diversity and in spite of all the opposition.

We have had the most remarkable instances of it in this war. For, on each side, more unity has been displayed than any nation has ever shown before. Neither France nor Germany, neither the

British Empire nor Russia, has ever been united as now. And even the Austro-Hungarian Empire has shown a degree of unity which no one had expected. Further, we do not seriously look upon the present conflict as the fundamental and lasting relationship between the nations engaged. Tremendous though it is, it is an episode only, and perhaps a means of paving the way to eventual unity. The fact that France and England, who were so bitterly hostile a century ago, are now allied, should point to the possibility of what may happen a century hence. All the opposition and struggle in life, so necessary for the development of individuality, need not blind us to the unity which underlies it and which the maturing of individuality will only strengthen.

And men who regard themselves as integral parts of a whole, with every single other part of which they are most intimately related, and who also realize that each, in his own small degree, con-

tributes to form that spirit which has made them, will have not only this deep sense of unity, but a craving to make it still closer and still more intimate. They will resent the tyranny of a rigid order imposed from outside, but they will establish for themselves that full and flexible order which free individuals, possessed of the sense of the responsibility which freedom engenders, naturally evolve for themselves. They will allow scope for individuality, for they will know that thereby will unity be increased. And the conflict which the emergence of individuality necessitates, they will seek to humanize and make more chivalrous and courteous, and they will always regard it as temporary and ephemeral in comparison with the fundamental unity. It is not so much peace and rest to which they would look forward as the harmony which comes of activity—an activity bent on fusing all discords.

And the upward thrust, urging all men

from the bad to the good, from the good to the better, and from the better to the better still, on and on to perfection, makes men mark out for themselves an ideal at which they can aim. And the more acute their sense of unity, the more painful will be any difference which separates them from either higher or lower men, and the sharper will be their yearning to reach the level of the higher and to carry others upward with them. A reaching-forwardness will they also feel—an intensity of desire, not only to make the best of themselves, to do their best for the present generation, but to sacrifice all for generations to come; not to save their own souls and not for any future happiness of their own (beyond that joy which comes to all who highly strive and greatly sacrifice), but that they may feel that they have done their mite to leave this world a little better than they found it.

But while men who have the later conception of things of which we have spoken

will feel themselves in deepening unity with their fellows and swept upward in the Universal Spirit, it will rest with individual men themselves to achieve in actual fact what they feel themselves incited to attempt.

We may be sure that in any of the countries now at war the statesmen, soldiers, and sailors are inspired by a deep love of country, that this patriotic feeling irresistibly impels them to do their very utmost for their country's good, and that it upholds them and sustains them in many an hour of trial. We know, too, that men like to put themselves in touch with what deepens and intensifies their patriotic fervor and gives fresh strength and volume to its ardent impulse. But we are also perfectly well aware that the mere possession of this impulse is not enough, and that actually to achieve what is really best for his country, each individual statesman, sailor, and soldier must exert his own will, must put forth his most con-

sidered wisdom, and make the utmost of every bodily and mental faculty he has. While he may be swept along with true and noble patriotic feeling, he knows that, when the moment for action arrives, he must keep his head cool and his faculties taut, and must act upon his own responsibility and depend upon his own resources.

So is it with men imbued with the Universal Spirit. They will be sensible of it working through them, making always for what is good, and propelling them upward. They may confidently count upon it to uphold them in every effort toward the good. And they may seek all means of drawing more and more of it into them and filling themselves with it to the full. And they will often feel themselves carried upward in waves of religious emotion which seem to make all things possible. But yet, in the very midst of the Spirit's onrush, they will have to realize that it is they, and they alone, who must make the choice from

among all the alternative courses which, moment after moment, present themselves; that it is they, and they alone, who must fix the standard by which to gauge their actions and set up far ahead of them the ideal toward which they will strive; and that it is they and they alone who must furnish the resolution, the steadfastness, and the endurance to persevere along the way they choose.

In one sense we individual men, as minute parts of a whole of unimaginable magnitude, are being swept onward and upward with seemingly irresistible force. In another sense the future of each individual and the worth of all his activity depends solely on himself. And the two views go together, the one being incomplete without the other. But a man's duty is clear. He must fill himself to the full with this exalting Spirit and lose no opportunity of inhaling it till he is saturated with it through and through, for it is from its inspiration that he will gain both

the strength he so much needs and the sensitiveness of taste and touch which is no less essential. On the other hand, when action is demanded he will concentrate himself, summon up all his resources, and rely only on himself, for it is he and only he that can create the future.

So we gain the impression of a day-spring from within and not from on high. We have faith in the innate Goodness of Things, in ourselves, and in the future it lies with us to make. We are inspired with hope as we realize what has been accomplished so far and what, therefore, may be done in time to come. And the sense of being so intimately related in one living whole and of being animated by the same uplifting Spirit deepens and widens our love. These three still remain. And the greatest of them is the same now as it was nineteen hundred years ago. But in the end there will be left only one—the greatest.

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